



Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 27, 2007
Wisconsin Rapids City Council Chambers
9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

LRSC Members Present

Wisconsin Counties Association:

Dan Fedderly
Dick Leffler
Emmer Shields

WisDOT Staff Present:

Rod Clark
Mary Forlenza
Lori Richter
Will Kline
Aileen Switzer

Wisconsin Towns Association:

Arlyn Helm
Gene Lueck
Terry McMahon

Wisconsin Alliance of Cities:

Dave Botts
Rick Jones
Jeff Mantes
Paula Vandehey

**Regional Planning Commissions/
Metro Planning Organizations:**

Sheldon Johnson
Walt Raith

Others Present:

Ms. Chunlan Zhang
Mr. Weimin Guo

League of Wisconsin Municipalities:

Dennis Jordan
Valerie Mellon
John Edlebeck

LRSC Members Excused:

Jeffrey Agee – Aguayo
Bill Beil, Jr.
Marilyn Bhend
Joni Graves
Bruce Stelzner

I. Opening business (Paula Vandehey, Mary Forlenza)

- A. The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.
- B. The Council welcomed new Council members John Edlebeck (City of Waupaca) and Valerie Mellon (City of Manitowoc).
- C. June 21, 2007, minutes
 - 1. A motion was made to accept the minutes.
 - 2. Motion carried.

II. 2008 Council Business (Mary)

- A. Proposed Meeting Calendar
 - 1. The following meeting dates for 2008 were proposed and adopted: March 27th, June 26th, September 25th, and December 11th.
- B. Updated Member Materials
 - 1. An updated Council member contact list was distributed. New BTLR LTE Heather Blatterman will be updating member materials, including the Membership Binder. These materials will be provided to Council members at the December Council meeting.

III. Committee Updates (Chairs)

- A. Executive (Paula)
 - 1. The LRSC's Committee Membership List was reviewed. Paula noted that there is now only one vacancy (REAL Committee) to be filled. The Committee brainstormed ideas for future Council and Committee meetings, including utility relocation charges, issues with railroads, wetland banking, and GTA.
- B. Infrastructure Management (Walt)
 - 1. Several WISLR topics were discussed, including training. The members are trying to understand the costs within WISLR. How do costs in WISLR relate to actual costs for all transportation spending? The Committee wants to review DOR materials that may help with this issue. Members would like to put together costing in WISLR for snowplowing, grader costs, and other things that do not show up in WISLR. Walt stated that WISLR gives the impression that you are doing really well but in fact you may not be because there are so many other factors to be considered. The Committee will continue to work on this issue with the long-term goal of creating best management practices for local governments to manage their local roads. Mary mentioned that the Local Transportation Finance Committee has pieces of this topic already in its workplan.
 - 2. Susie Forde gave a WISLR training summary. This summer's training went well. In addition, as of September 17, 2007, 179 communities have provided their pavement ratings (101 via Web-WISLR). The percentage breakdown of submittals is 55% from the towns, 30% from the villages, 13% from the cities, and 4% from the counties. The statewide submittal deadline is December 15th.
- C. Regulatory, Environmental & Legislative (Dennis)
 - 1. Cameron Bump (DNR) provided an update on the single point of contact issue.
 - 2. The topic of land to purchase for mitigation purposes was also discussed. It was stated that if you are not involved in a state or federal program "you are basically on your own". Dennis mentioned that his community has been informed that they will have to go to Kansas or Nebraska to purchase land for mitigation purposes. He stated that you should be able to purchase land in your own state. The Committee will continue to work on a solution to this problem.

3. The Committee reviewed documentation on the truck weight issue including logging mill ticket reports. At first glance some Committee members did not think there was a big problem. But Emmer explained that some of the details, such as axle placement etc., can have an impact on weight distribution. The Committee is looking for additional information on this issue.
 4. A new topic for the Committee to research is the way the State of Maryland and FHWA are working together to streamline the historic/archeological studies process. It may be possible to avoid having to do historic/archeological studies in certain situations. Rod indicated that WisDOT tried to work with the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) several years ago to streamline the regulatory process in Wisconsin, but that effort was not successful.
- D. Local Transportation Finance (Rick)
1. At their first meeting for the year in early November, the Committee will begin looking at GTA, expense codes, and defining the STP Urban/Rural split issue. Rick stated that he plans to schedule meetings once a month or every other month.
- E. Education & Communication (Joanie absent)
1. Lori Richter gave an update on the Committee's activities. Draft updates have been made to the GTA Brochure; Joanie and Rick have reviewed the changes. The next step is to submit the brochure to WisDOT's Creative Services group once the AASHTO Conference is over in September. A specific target date for completion will follow.
- F. Breakouts to Schedule 2008 Committee Meetings
1. Mary introduced two guests from China (Ms. Chunlan Zhang and Mr. Weimin Guo). Committee members then met to schedule future Committee meeting dates.

IV. State & Federal Budget Update (Jim Donlin, WisDOT)

A. Federal Budget

1. Both houses of Congress have passed a budget bill for 2008. The funding levels are \$41 billion for highways and \$7.9 billion for transit. Both bills include a rescission of about \$3 billion. The Democrats have a goal of having about half as many earmarks as there were in 2006. The House is projecting one third as many earmarks and the Senate is projecting about half as many earmarks as there were in 2006.
2. The Senate bill passed with a new bridge program, which came about due to the bridge failure in Minnesota. The program would have \$1 billion in funding and would be distributed by formula with no earmarks allowed. Jim stated that Wisconsin would not benefit much from the program because our bridges are in too good of condition. Council members discussed the unfairness of Wisconsin being penalized for maintaining their bridges.
3. The House passed a continuing resolution that funds the government through November 16th. The resolution is called a clean extension and it will provide 47/366 of a year's funding. The Senate is expected to pass a continuing resolution in the next few days.
4. Jim discussed the funding of the war in Iraq and stated that the total budget for the year is \$189 billion over budget.
5. Jim stated that the future of federal funding is dim. The current estimate for the end of 2009 cash shortfall for the Highway Trust Fund is \$5.1 billion. Congress would have to cut \$18.9 billion in funding in 2009 to make up for the cash

shortage. Wisconsin would need to cut \$370 million due to the cash shortfall. Wisconsin's budget for 2009 is \$648. The decrease is largely due to an increase in fuel prices, which reduced consumption. An additional reason for the decrease is that SAFETEA-LU had overly optimistic estimates for fuel tax revenues. Many stakeholders want to increase the fuel tax but it hasn't been increased since 1993. Jim said it will take political courage to address this issue. Some legislators are talking about the idea of taking fuel tax exemptions and rebates and transferring them from Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund. They also want to better address tax evasion, which they were supposed to do in SAFETEA-LU. Optimistic estimates are that these two issues would bring in \$2 billion. The Federal Highway Administration's Highway Condition and Performance Report states that an additional \$78.8 billion per year will be needed to just maintain highway conditions over next 20 years.

6. Secretary Busalacchi is currently serving on the National Surface Transportation Policy Revenue Study Commission, which has been appointed by the President to look at a vision for transportation policy and funding over the next 50 years. They will address issues in three time periods: short-term (now through 2015), mid-term (through 2030), and long-term (through 2050). The Commission is currently writing their report to Congress.
7. There have been several bonding bills drafted or introduced at the federal level. He expects to see a new one in the next couple of days. WisDOT has always been against bonding at the federal level. Some other issues associated with bonding bills include quasi-government agencies deciding where the funding goes, which further removes decision making from the public eye, and placing a large emphasis on public-private partnerships including members of the private sector serving on the board of quasi-government organizations.
8. Rod asked Jim how WisDOT would proceed if half of the federal funding was cut when we were several months into FY 2009. How would we respond to locals that have projects moving forward? Jim stated that his office has had a few meetings on this issue and that the Secretary's office is aware of the issue. The reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU was brought up during the discussion with Dan Fedderly stating that the current issues being discussed are important but that people should also begin to focus on reauthorization. Rod requested that the Local Transportation Finance Committee put the federal funding question on their next agenda to create some recommendations for WisDOT to review. There was general discussion on the issues of turn backs and county wheel taxes.

B. State Budget

1. Jim began by stating that the Governor has stepped in to help with the budget discussions. There are 68 differences in transportation issues between the Assembly and the Senate versions and they have only agreed on two items. The two sides are \$200 million apart on transportation revenues. He gave several examples of the differences between the Assembly and Senate budget proposals. Topics included the heavy truck registration fee, oil franchise fee, non-WisDOT appropriations, supplemental title fee, debt service, and title fee. The Assembly's revenue proposal comes very close to the Governor's.
2. There are also big differences between the Assembly and the Senate on the funding side. Topics discussed included GTA, transit, LRIP, state highway rehabilitation, majors program, southeast freeway system, and commuter rail.

Jim and Rod summarized the proposed bicycle/pedestrian program and how it would impact the Enhancement and CMAQ programs. The Assembly is recommending that the Aviation Career Education Program be eliminated. There are seven non-budget policy issues in the transportation budget. Areas of agreement between the Assembly and the Senate include registration fees, maintenance, creation of the SRTS program, funding to complete the Marquette Interchange, begin work on Interstate 94 north/south between Milwaukee and the Illinois border, and funding for Amtrak Hiawatha service.

V. Connections 2030 Update (Aileen Switzer, WisDOT)

Aileen and WisDOT's Planning area have been working with Mary and Rod on the local road policy portion of the Plan, and provided the Council with a status update.

1. Plan Development Process

The Connections 2030 Plan development process has five phases:

Phase 1 – Early Planning Phase

- Developed plan themes
- Identified policy topic areas
- Identified statewide corridors
- Conducted early public and internal outreach activities

Phase 2 – Pre-draft Plan (the phase that is currently being implemented)

- Develop individual policies and arranged by theme
- Prepare supporting chapters: finance, implementation, system-plan, environmental evaluation and environmental justice analysis
- Revise statewide corridors to identify implementation activities
- Compare WisDOT plan activities to MPO, RPC, and tribal plans
- Initiate consultation process with environmental resource agencies, MPOs, RPCs, and tribes
- Conduct internal outreach activities

Phase 3 – Draft Plan

- Anticipate a 60-day public comment period – public information meetings, targeting small group meetings
- Update plan to reflect public comments received
- Document comments received and how comments were addressed

Phase 4 – Final Plan

- Anticipate a 30-day public comment period – public hearings
- Update plan to reflect any additional public comments received
- Document comments received and how comments were addressed

Phase 5 – Plan Adoption

- Adopt the final plan in 2008

2. Plan Overview

Connections 2030 is the state's long-range multi-modal transportation plan. It sets forth the blueprint for Wisconsin's transportation system over the next 20+ years. Connections 2030 is structured as a policy- and implementation-focused plan; a departure from previous long-range needs-based plans. Connections 2030 links statewide transportation policy to region-level implementation activities. Each policy includes a set of action steps to implement the policy and identify whether current funding or additional funding will support them. In addition, the detailed corridor maps are a visual tool to implement plan policies and communicate long-range plan actions to stakeholders, the public and WisDOT staff.

The Plan is organized around the following seven themes:

- Preserve Wisconsin's Transportation System
- Promote Transportation Safety
- Promote Transportation Security
- Promote Transportation Efficiencies
- Provide Mobility and Transportation choice
- Preserve and Enhance Wisconsin's Quality of Life
- Foster Wisconsin's Economic Growth

Connections 2030 emphasizes preservation and seamless connections between modes.

3. Local Roads Portion of the Plan

What we have heard from LRSC and local representatives during the early planning phase:

- Maintenance and preservation is a priority
- Funding continues to be an issue
- Rail, particularly in the northern part of the state where lines are being abandoned, should be identified as a priority
- Freight movements and overweight vehicles is a safety and preservation concern
- State plan and regional activities must be connected
- Reference importance of WISLR
- Intergovernmental coordination and cooperation should be referenced
- System connectivity is vital to keeping communities economically viable

Background

- 90% of public road mileage in Wisconsin is local
- Local roads provide critical connections for all transportation modes
- Many trips occur entirely on the local system; other trips start or end on the local system
- WISLR is a data and asset management tool for local roads

Key issues identified

- Funding in general
- Lack of stable funding for high cost systems – high cost local bridges, National Highway System, - local routes and other arterials, connecting highways
- Oversize/overweight trucks
- Safety data needs
- Coordination

Proposed Connections 2030 local roads policy focus areas

- Work with local units to define a vision for the local transportation system to establish a level of investment necessary to allow it to adequately fulfill its role
- Assist local governments in developing and adopting asset management strategies to ensure selected system preservation and improvements provide the service life extension at the lowest cost
- Work with local entities to identify and address key safety issues on the local system
- Manage and invest in the local network as a partner with local governments

Mary discussed Council efforts to date and Rod stressed that we are looking at a single network, not two separate transportation systems. WisDOT needs to start looking at the local system as an integral partner. The fundamental corridor approach of the Plan is very appropriate. But what is the corridor going to mean to the local system? How will it assist with local economic development opportunities? WISLR was mentioned as a way WisDOT is assisting local governments develop and adopt asset management strategies. WISLR is also being used to visually portray crash data. The UW-TIC circuit rider safety training and high-risk rural roads were also mentioned. WisDOT has done a relatively good job of funding low cost bridge projects but additional funding is needed for high cost needs such as projects in downtown Milwaukee and additional Wisconsin River crossings.

Walt commented that one of the things he likes about the Plan is that it is not planning for not having enough money. Emmer stated that one topic that never seems to get addressed is the cost on a per mile basis to support the trucking industry, particularly oversize/overweight trucks. Someone needs to finally tackle this issue. He also mentioned that the rail industry in northern Wisconsin is difficult to work with because they are raising their rates, provide poor service, and then asking regulators to abandon lines when they have basically pushed away their customers. Emmer also mentioned that a lot of raw materials etc. are traveling on the local system, not just on the primary corridors. John Edlebeck stated that maybe more local participation in projects will help shortfall funding.

Aileen will keep the Council posted on Plan progress.

VI. Local Roads Update (Mary)

Mary distributed an updated list of BTLR Local Transportation Program and Finance Section contacts to the Committee members. Lori discussed the statutory deadline that requires WisDOT to send out GTA estimates by October 1st of every year for the following calendar year's quarterly payments. The GTA estimate is based on the most recent cost data that has been submitted to the Department of Revenue. This year's costs are approximately \$1.85 billion, with a three-year average of \$1.75 billion, and a six-year average of \$1.7 billion. The purpose of those estimates is to help locals with their budgeting for the following year and also to help them take a look at the cost data that we base their GTA payments on and determine if it looks like something that will last so that they can actually go back to the Department of Revenue and make some corrections before we determine the final payment levels in mid-December. The CHA payments, which WisDOT also gets an estimate on, are based on certified lane miles for state trunk highways that go through municipalities. The GTA, in addition to the most recent cost data, is also based on updated mileage data and WisDOT also does some analysis on updated population data as well. Since there is no state budget at this time, WisDOT is basing the estimates on current levels. The appropriation levels have been left at last year's fiscal year appropriations levels (\$ 92.8 for counties and \$ 291.8 million for municipalities). The rate per mile stayed the same at \$18.99 per mile. The bad news is that the share of cost percent declined compared to last calendar year from about 22.5% to 17.4% for counties and from about 18.3% to 16.5% for municipalities. This is not the final word on what the GTA estimates will be since we will be doing the final estimates in December.

Lori mentioned that there were a high number of late filers this year. They are posted on the GTA Web site. This is costing locals a lot of GTA funding when they are late. This year had the highest the number of late filers ever (38 municipalities were late).

Mary indicated that Lori and her staff held LRIP meetings late summer and early fall in all of the Regions and that they met with county highway commissioners and public works officials from large cities and villages. LRIP information for this biennium was distributed at the meetings. Last biennium numbers were used due to the lack of a state budget.

Mary discussed the local highway program balancing process that Central Office and the Regions are working on at the present time. WisDOT wants to balance the program by ensuring that we do not spend more than the legislature provides the program but that we also having enough projects in the pipeline to spend all the annual, and potential increases, in federal aid.

A. Local Force Account (LFA) Update

1. The Council last heard about this issue in June when FHWA had received information back from WisDOT replying to FHWA's report on LFA work. Recent meetings on this issue have included Tracey McKenney, Don Miller, and Dan Fedderly. The meetings were held to better clarify for all parties involved what FHWA specifically meant when they provided the information on LFA to WisDOT.

A conference call took place last week with WCHA, WisDOT, and FHWA to update everyone on the LFA situation. The group identified a group of key recommendations. The "Phase 2" process is designed to ensure that everyone understands the issues being discussed and then there will be follow-up with specific implementation proposals for each issue. Dan Fedderly added that they have identified specific projects that need immediate attention.

B. Estimates for CY 2008 Without a State Budget

1. Rod summarized the proposed state bicycle/pedestrian program and its potential impact on the federal Enhancement and CMAQ programs. BTLR is scheduled to kick-off the Enhancement program in January 2008. There is some crossover eligibility between the SRTS program and the Enhancement program. BTLR anticipates starting with the SRTS program first because it has 100% funding and that some projects may move from SRTS to the Enhancement program.

C. Outreach & Training Schedule (WTA, WCHA, etc.)

Mary mentioned that BTLR recently attended the annual MPO/RPC meeting in August to discuss the program balancing process. BTLR will be at the next WCA meeting talking about GTA and LRIP. BTLR will also be attending the 2008 WCHA winter and summer conferences. Internal WisDOT meetings will be held during the conferences. WisDOT has committed to having local meetings in each Region. Lastly, WisDOT continues to work with the UW-TIC. Mary mentioned that almost 1,000 people participated in the spring and summer WISLR/Paser training.

VII. Closing Business

- A. Draft Agenda for December 6th Council Meeting
 - 1. Panel for oversize/overweight truck issue. Emmer suggested inviting a state trooper and a representative from the town of Hull to describe how they came up with their flow chart.
 - 2. Have Joe Nestler (WisDOT) speak about additional functionality being added to WISLR.
- B. Meeting Adjourned